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ABSTRACT

A preliminary study described the first 6 months after the introduction of broadcast television to the Cook Islands, a self-governing group of 15 Polynesian islands in the South Pacific ocean, on Christmas Day, 1989. Data were gathered from field observations and in-depth face-to-face interviews conducted in the Cook Islands during a 2-month period in the summer of 1990. Interviews were conducted with management and employees of Cook Island Television (CITV), former employees of CITV, the chairman of the Cook Islands Broadcasting Corporation's Board of Directors, government officials, local scholars and statisticians, teachers, video rental outlet owners, and local television and video viewers. Interviews were conducted on the two Cook Islands that comprise about 60% of the Cook Island's total population. Descriptive data discussed technical features, national integration, development goals, the structure of CITV, cultural concerns, programming, news, economic considerations, advertising, impact on other media industries, capital flight, and television in the outer islands. Findings suggest that broadcast television came to the Cook Islands at considerable expense. The case of broadcast television in the Cook Islands provides a rich site for academic media scholars from a wide range of theoretical perspectives. (A figure illustrating a map of the Cook Islands is included; 155 references are attached.) (RS)

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The Introduction of Broadcast Television in the Cook Islands:

A Report on the First Six Months.

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The Introduction of Broadcast Television in the Cook Islands: A Report on the First Six Months.

In the past forty years broadcast television has been introduced in the majority of nations throughout the world. Yet throughout this period the newly independent island nations of the South Pacific have strongly resisted the introduction of broadcast television largely fearing the neo-colonial cultural domination that would possibly accompany it. In recent years, however, such resistance has been eroding. Indeed, within the past couple of years a number of Pacific Island nations have introduced broadcast television and currently the idea is being seriously persued by many other Pacific island nations. What has changed? Why the sudden enthusiasm to introduce television?

This paper reports on the first six months of Cook Islands Television (CITV) which began its broadcasting on Christmas Day of 1989 as the Prime Minister's Christmas gift to the people. The data from which this report is derived is based on field observation and in-depth face-to-face interviews conducted in the Cook Islands during a two-month period in the summer of 1990. Interviews were conducted with management and employees of CITV, former employees of CITV, the chairman of the Cook Islands Broadcasting Corporation's (CIBC) Board of Directors, government officials, local scholars and statisticians, teachers, video rental outlet owners, and mostly with local television and video viewers. All interviews were conducted on the main island of Rarotonga and on the outer island of Mangaia[1]. A survey attempting to assess the impact of VCR use in Mangaia was also conducted in collaboration with Mr. Fred Webb, a local school teacher, and his fifth form class (grade 11) at the local high school. The students administered the instrument within a one-week period (July, 1990) to every household on Mangaia that owned a VCR (N=50 accounting for roughly 20% of all households on the island)[2]. This study, mostly descriptive, provides preliminary formative research for future study in the region by the author.

Indeed, there is no other geographical region of the planet more seriously underrepresented in current media literature than the South Pacific. Not only are there very few articles, but even among the few studies that have been done, it is difficult to discover many studies of any significant quality. The vast majority of literature is purely descriptive in nature — and even then, such literature provides little more than a rough overview of the media systems themselves with almost no consideration of audiences, policy, economics or the like. If there are quality studies, such as Schramm's Bold

[1]The populations of these two islands accounts for roughly 60% of the total population of the Cook Islands.

[2]Results of these findings will be discussed in greater detail in a seperate paper currently being prepared by the author in collaboration with Fred Webb.

Experiment, they tend to be based on findings from the 1970's — indeed, it is suprising to note the extent to which the region has been neglected in more recent years.

Of course, much has changed since the 1970's. Politically, the South Pacific has seen an increasing number of its islands emerge as independent nations. With independence attention has shifted from colonial domination towards the many pressing concerns of the day that self-government has brought to the forefront. Moreover, the advent of newer communication technologies — particularly VCR's and satellites — have carried televised programs to even the remotest corners of the Pacific. No longer are these islands isolated — at least insofar as media images are concerned. And much of this content has featured themes portraying values very foreign to these island societies bringing to the forefront questions which media scholars are eager to address. In view of such considerable change, how can media scholars continue to neglect the South Pacific?

Not all of the South Pacific has been neglected. Much attention has been paid, for example, to efforts aimed at improving education in American Samoa through the use of television. French scholars have written on television in Tahiti, introduced there in 1965. Such studies, however, are addressing media systems which emerged in island territories (not independent nations) almost entirely financed through foreign powers. Indeed, broadcast television in the South Pacific prior to the 1980's is almost exclusively a story of television in French and American territories (Johnston, 1984).[3]

Throughout the 1980's the question of introducing television had been seriously considered by a number of the Pacific Island Nations (PIN's). At one stage, there was even serious talk about Australia's Channel Nine developing a regional satellite-based television network. Six island nations had agreed to participate in the network, including Fiji (Richstad, 1984). The coup in Fiji, however, seriously derailed this effort.[4] In more recent years, a number of PIN's have developed their own national broadcast television networks — these include Papua New Guinea, Niue, and the Cook Islands.

The Cook Islands is unique in that it represents a television system in an independent South Pacific nation[5] financed entirely by the inhabitants of the island-nation themselves. Indeed, Cook Islands Television is the first national television system in the South Pacific to be entirely self-

[3]There is, of course, also the case of Easter Island's television system established in 1975 by the Chilean government.

[4]A number of scholars maintain that Fiji and Papua New Guinea provide the only markets to make broadcast television viable. The Channel Nine proposal was based on Fiji acting as the main hub for the region. When it became clear that the Rambuka governement in Fiji did not favor the Channel Nine system the proposal fizzled.

[5]Officially the Cook Islands is "self-governing in free association with New Zealand." This will be discussed in greater detail further in the text.

financed. Since this is more analagous to the television systems currently being considered by other Pacific island nations, the Cook Islands experience may be of particular value.

Of course, one does not have to rely exclusively on literature focusing on the South Pacific to consider the impact of the introduction of broadcast television in a society. Numerous studies have examined this issue as it relates to the introduction of television in various societies throughout the world. Most impressive, perhaps, is the study by Katz and Wedell (1977) entitled Broadcasting in the Third World: Promise and Performance. Indeed, many of the concerns raised by these scholars seem as applicable to the introduction of television in the Cook Islands as they did to the various nations included in this famous study. Katz and Wedell's research is particularly valuable in that it examined issues associated with the political, cultural and economic considerations in introducing television. It is not suprising, however, that the Pacific region is not represented in the study. From among the 91 countries which they used as the statistical basis for their study, only one was from the South Pacific — and it did not have television.

This report is part of a modest attempt to add to the work of Katz and Wedell by studying the introduction of television in the Cook Islands in its larger context. At this stage, the report provides little more than descriptive data. As such, it does not attempt to make a significant contribution to existing literature. Rather, it serves as formative research for a more in-depth study to be conducted over a six-month period in the near future. Moreover, the study represents but the first six months of television in the Cook Islands. Much remains to be seen. Hopefully, however, the report serves to help stimulate further research in the region. Such is the intent of the author.

The Introduction of Television in the Cook Islands

The Cook Islands are a series of 15 Polynesian islands located roughly midway between Hawaii and New Zealand in the South Pacific ocean. Its total land area of 150 square miles means that it is collectively even smaller than the state of Rhode Island. Yet these 15 islands are spread out over an area of 850,000 square miles making travel between the islands difficult. Indeed, ships only pass through some of the islands once every six months. Figure [1] provides a map illustrating the Cook Islands position in the South Pacific and a map of the 15 islands that comprise the nation.

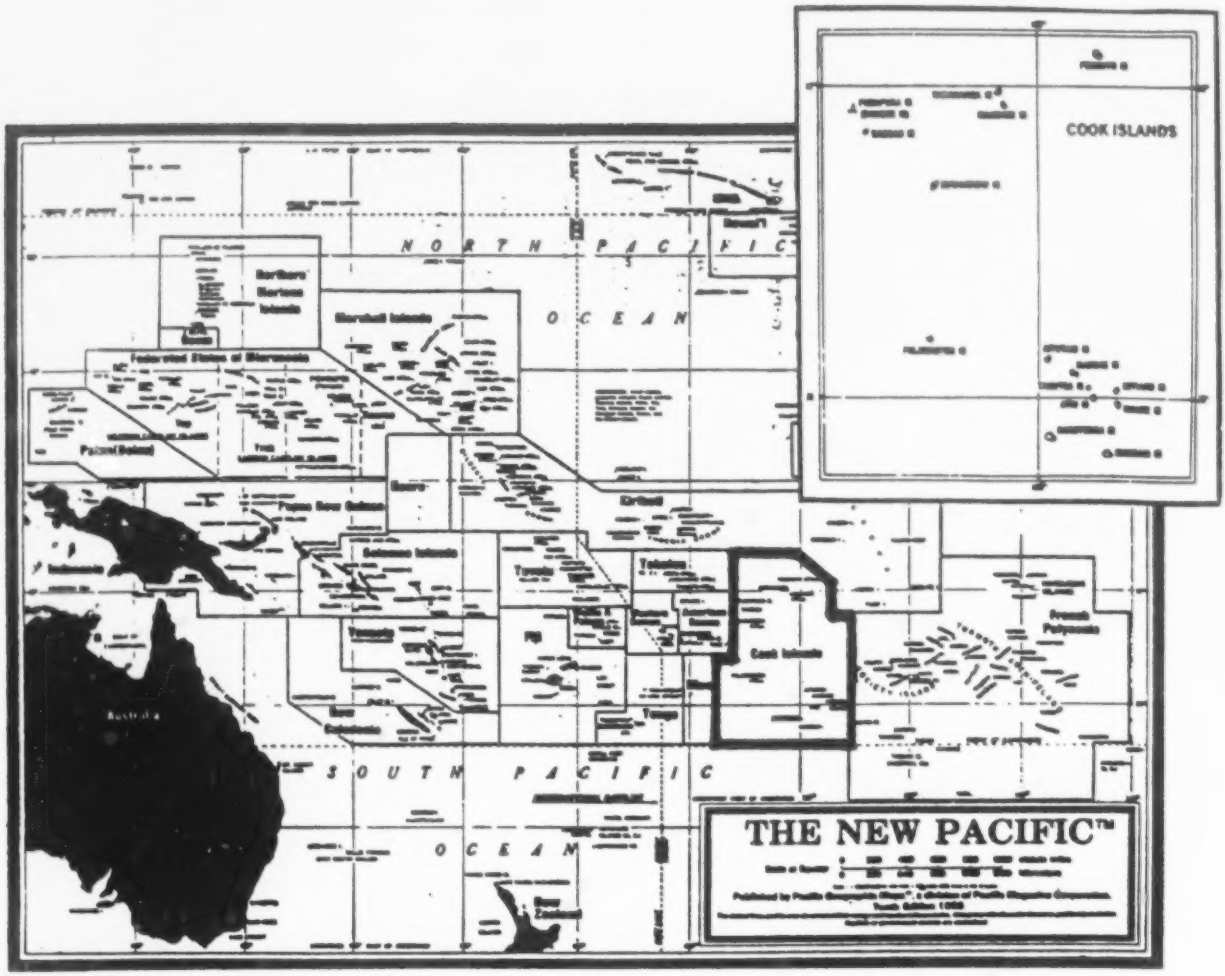

Figure [1]: Map depicting location of Cook Islands in the South Pacific.
Offset map in upper right side depicts the 15 islands that comprise this nation.

Source: Pacific Magazine Corporation.

The total population of inhabitants in the Cook Islands is less than 20,000 — over half of whom live on the main island of Rarotonga. Although the Cook Islands, formerly a New Zealand colony, became self-governing in 1965, it still relies heavily upon New Zealand for defence and foreign policy. Indeed, Cook Islanders enjoy dual citizenship with New Zealand and are free to come and go to New Zealand and Australia at will — a situation which has resulted in many Cook Islanders emigrating in persuit of better employment opportunities. Not suprisingly, there are currently more Cook Islanders in both New Zealand and Australia than there are in the Cook Islands itself.

Imports to the Cook Islands greatly outweigh exports. Its exports are primarily to New Zealand and consist mainly of fruits, vegtables, and increasingly clothing and footwear. Tourism is the main money-earning industry in the Cook Islands. Considerable amounts of money are also sent back to relatives still living in the Cook Islands from those working in Australia and New Zealand. Even still, the Cook Islands relies heavily upon foreign aid to help keep its economy afloat.

The Cook Islands lacks econmies of scale due to its small population size. Notwithstanding, it has one of the strongest media infrastructures in the South Pacific. The Cook Islands News is one of only nine daily newspapers from among the over 150 periodicals in the many islands of the South Pacific (Layton, 1990)[6]. The Cook Islands was first among the Pacific Island Nations to introduce FM radio — a service which is run by private enterprise in competition with the government-run AM radio station[7]. A cinema continues to bring new movies within months of their release in the United States. Video rental outlets have permeated the islands for almost a decade. And with the advent of broadcast television, the Cook Islands is first in the Pacific to introduce a national television network financed entirely by an island-nation itself.

One must remember, again, that the total population of the entire Cook Islands is less than 20,000 — smaller than many university populations in the United States. Indeed, only three of the fifteen islands have populations over a thousand. Futhermore, the islands are generally small with extremely short distances between villages. Consequently, there are strong interpersonal networks. This presents an interesting situation whereby the population is rich in sources of information, relying on both interpersonal as well as mass mediated channels.

Talk about introducing television to this island nation has been around for many years. In the late 1970's a number of proposals to introduce such services were rejected by the government. To a large extent, such rejection was justified on the grounds that television would wipe away the indigenous Maori culture. In the 1980's there was less resistance to the idea — at various stages the government

[6]It is also one of only three dailies among the PIN's which are locally owned (Government frees the press, 1990).

[7]Officially introduced October 13, 1979 - five years prior to the introduction of FM in New Zealand (Breeton, 1989).

actually approved proposals by private enterprises. All such proposals, however, never materialized as prospects for economic returns could not be justified by the intensive capital investment required to get television broadcasting services on the air.

In May of 1989, however, the newly elected Prime Minister of the Cook Islands announced that the nation was to have its own TV station by Christmas of that same year. A timetable was set and proposals were solicited towards developing the TV system. A proposal submitted by Television New Zealand (TVNZ) was selected and plans began to quickly meet the Christmas deadline. TVNZ's interests were primarily in expanding its Pacific market. Having already developed a broadcast television system in Niue[8], TVNZ was attempting to win markets in Fiji, the Solomons, and any other island nations looking to introduce television. The Cook Islands provided a stepping stone to their strategy. This was particularly appealing in that it came at no cost to TVNZ (unlike the situation in Niue). Indeed, TVNZ even stood to profit by supplying programming at a modest cost.

Technical features

TVNZ developed the basics for what eventually emerged as CITV. Initially all negotiations were handled through the Cook Islands Post Office, which worked with TVNZ in constructing the network. There was some debate as to whether to develop a cable-based or broadcast system. Among the arguments for cable were that tropical weather conditions made broadcast towers particularly vulnerable to hurricanes and cyclones[9]; that coconut trees made reception by household antennas difficult[10]; and that use of cable would enable easier collection of user fees. The Post Office opted for a broadcast system, however, maintaining that costs for a cable system would be prohibitive given mountain terrain and the isolation of some housing areas (McCarthy, 1990).

Although TVNZ had initially proposed building only a few high powered transmitters in the mountains, the costs for such a system proved to be prohibitive, particularly given the lack of transport infrastructure in that area. Instead the broadcast system relies on nine low-power repeater translators erected along the coast encircling Rarotonga. There was some delay in erection of the final translator as a dispute emerged amongst members of the family that owned the land upon which the

[8]With a population of roughly 2000, Niue is probably the world's smallest national broadcast system. The system was paid for by the New Zealand government. Initially TVNZ provided all programming for free although at the time this research was being conducted TVNZ was apparently considering charging for such material.

[9]Indeed, only a few months into operation, high seas during Cyclone Peni seriously damaged one of the islands translator stations (Ngatangiia TV translator replaced, March 7, 1990).

[10]Thereby requiring higher antennas (See McCarthy, 1990). Perhaps an unanticipated problem was that people might damage the network when attempting to pick coconuts. In one of the few accidents during the first few months of CITV, an individual accidently touched overhead power lines with his coconut pole hook causing a short in the system blacking out television in certain parts of the island (Sword, January 6, 1990).

mast was to be built[11]. Eventually, however, the dispute was resolved and the final translator was erected in time for the December 25 deadline.

One of the Cook Islands Office for Development Planning buildings was renovated into CITV's studio (while also doubling as the AM radio station's studio). A fixed satellite downlink dish was built in the yard of CITV's new studio, set to receive feeds from TVNZ. Equipment for the new studio did not arrive until early December, less than a month prior to CITV's inauguration date[12]. The main selection criteria for equipment was portability, so that any defective equipment which local technicians could not repair could be easily shipped back to New Zealand for maintenance. CITV went to air with three S-VHS cameras, three editing bays, studio lights and microphones, a switcher[13], a lighting mixer[14] and an NTSC converter.

Probably the greatest challenge, however, came in training the staff to use the new equipment while attempting to meet the Christmas deadline. The CIBC Board had not been appointed until the end of October leaving them with less than two months to attempt to put together the nations broadcast network. Even one month before air date, little training had occured despite serious effort in this regard. The problem was that there was noone who knew how to use the editing equipment and thereby train others. In late November, however, a tourist on the island was discovered who had been working as a cameraman in Australia. His services were quickly recruited and the staff at CITV spent the remainder of the month training to meet the Christmas deadline.

Why all the push to meet the Christmas deadline? Didn't this seem unrealistic and out of reach? Even the members of the CIBC Board doubted whether they could make it. But the Prime Minister made it clear that every effort would be made to meet the Christmas deadline. Even the country's Religious Advisory Council opposed the Christmas date, arguing that it was a special family day and would detract from the spirit of Christmas (Bailey, November 22, 1989). Instead they suggested a New Years inauguration. The CIBC took these concerns to the Prime Minister — but he insisted upon the Christmas date. Some of the consequences to this rush will be discussed further in the text. What is clear, however, is that the Prime Minister placed great value in introducing television. What did he hope television would accomplish?

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[11]The land-tenure system in the Cook Islands is based on family clans. Half of the Raina family had given approval while the other refused (See Family dispute stops TV mast, December 15, 1989).

[12]A shipment arrived on December 1st that included two Panasonic S-VHS cameras; two editing bays; and six crates of lighting equipment at a cost of NZ$200,000 (See Early Christmas, December 1, 1989).

[13]The switcher had a built-in character generator - but it was extremely limited in application.

[14]The lighting mixer was 110v. and had to be replaced when it was accidently plugged into a 220v. socket.

National Integration

The Prime Minister's opening remarks on television voiced the hope that television would serve as a powerful tool in helping integrate the diverse islands that make up the nation. On numerous occasions he has refered to this as his drive towards 'one people - one nation.' "The project we will embark upon early next year will provide part of the necessary infrastructure that will bring realism to the notion of all of us being of one people and one nation. . . I fear that the longer we delay this project, the more difficult it will be to draw together all of our people in Rarotonga and in all our far flung islands as one nation. . . Effective economic development, in the 'age of information' is impossible without modern communication ($12 million project to link country, December 7, 1989)."

Introducing television in Rarotonga was but one step in his plan. For television to promote national integration it must be made available to the outer islands as well. In response the government has announced a three year telecommunications expansion program designed to extend television and telephone services to all 15 islands. The expansion program will cost over $12 million dollars[15] — efforts continue to secure the necessary loans[16]. Already, one of the outer islands — Aitutaki — has been improving its telecommunications infrastructure and was schedueled to begin broadcast television in Christmas of 1990. Programming on the outer islands will essentially be a repeat of exactly what aired on the main island of Rarotonga — transported and rebroadcast in the form of videotapes.

The NZ$12 million dollar telecommunication expansion program marks a major investment in the country's infrastructure. To a large extent it has been justified based on a consultant's report which states that nations usually receive a 7 to 10 times return in their telecommunication investment. Thus predictions are that the investment will stimulate over NZ$60 million in business growth (Telecom chief predicts $60 million business growth, December 8, 1989). Repaying the loans, then, is not seen as a problem given the potential returns from the telecommunication investment. An interesting argument — but to what extent does this seem likely in the Cook Islands?

For one thing, such returns on telecommunication investment most probably occur in societies with sufficient transportation infrastructure to support such an increase. In such societies the lack of adequate communication facilities may serve to impede what the economy could otherwise sustain. However, the transportation infrastructure in the outer islands remains appalling. Energy is constantly rationed because a ship is weeks late in arriving with more diesel. Moreover, most of the outer islands have populations of less than 500. It remains to be seen whether this limited population size, and the limited industry in which they engage, can sustain the type of growth "typical" of

[15]Roughly equal to US$7,000,000.

[16]At the time of this writing, the principle sources for the loan were the Asian Development Bank and Australian government loan agency. (Sword, March 13, 1990).

telecommunication investment. Futhermore, 80% of all telecommunications revenue in the Cook Islands comes from international services (Sword, March 13, 1990). Yet Cable & Wireless holds the franchise on external telecommunications services until 1995. In consideration of such factors, how will the expense of expansion of television to the outer islands ever be repaid?

Some might argue that television has indirect returns to an economy. Thus, for example, Stevenson (1986) attempted to demonstrate a positive correlation between investment in television and economic growth. His findings suggest, much to his own surprise, that there is no such evidence among the developing nations included in his sample. Indeed, if anything, there was actually a negative relationship between the two.

The point here is not to suggest that investment in a communication infrastructure represents a waste of funds. Rather, the author presents these figures to help illustrate the extent to which the current government has made a priority for such national integration. Indeed, the 15 island societies that make up the Cook Islands are very diverse. Such diversity is most clearly seen in tensions which often surface between the main island of Rarotonga and the various outer islands. Whether television can help ease such tensions — or whether it serves to further contribute to it by creating impressions of greater domination by the main island — remains to be seen.

The tension between national integration and resistance to assimilation is nothing new — practically every society around the world struggles with similar issues. Whether such integration is desireable to begin with is largely a normative question with no simple answers. Futhermore, whether television will help integrate the outer islands (for such integration seems to be primarily conceptualized as one in which the outer islands will become more like Rarotonga) towards a national identity is equally questionable. If nothing else, however, it seems that television may have the potential to contribute to some "symbolic" concept of a national identity.

In persuit of this objective, CITV has made an exceptional effort to cover local events. The Broadcast Act specifies part of CITV's central function as "contributing to the development of national unity.[17]" Indeed, the CIBC sees coverage of local dance contests, the investiture of the new queen, the Constitution celebrations, and the like as being one of the primary "returns" that television offers society[18]. In this manner, CITV is actively promoting "symbols" of national identity.

Such symbolic meaning is not only confined towards the ways in which Cook Islanders see themselves, but also seems implicit in how they think others will perceive them. The Cook Islands government continues to struggle for a sense of legitimacy in the international community. Its unique relationship with New Zealand has made it difficult for the Cook Islands to assert its own status as an

[17]Cook Islands Broadcast Act, Section 7-1c.
[18]Interview with Tim Arnold, chairman of the CIBC.

independent nation. This has resulted in a number of contradictions. Thus, while Unesco and the South Pacific Fourm recognize the Cook Islands as an independent nation, the United Nations does not. Of course, the Cook Islands is free to part in its relationship from New Zealand, if it so chooses. But in so doing it would also probably loose its trade status with New Zealand[19] and much of its foreign aid[20]. Its free association with New Zealand remains a sensitive issue.

Part of its current strategy towards developing broadcast television seems to be premised on the symbolic value of representing the Cook Islands as a modern nation — with a free democratic press. The Prime Minister had run on a platform which, among other things, promised to greatly improve the flow of information. "Far from being a bane to the government, we would hope that through good investigative journalism, industrious reporters would be able to bring to light situations of public concern within government, within the private sector, as well as within the community as a whole demanding remedial action for the public good. The onus would then be on my Government to take approrpiate action - and it will do so with gratitude to the journalists involved (Sword, Feb 27, 1990)."[21]

The Cook Islands has been taking a leading initiative in media issues within the region. Thus it hosted the South Pacific Fourm Media Workshop to address problems between governments and media[22]. It was among seven countries that offered a site for the regional news service Pacnews when it was ousted from Fiji (Sword, May 3, 1990). The Prime Minister fulfilled his campaign promise to privatize the Cook Island Daily News. And, according the the CIBC, government has not intervened whatsoever in CITV's editorial policy (CIBC chairman responds to TV attack, May 16, 1990). Given such considerations it seems clear that the primary purpose in introducing television in the Cook Islands was national integration — both to those within the Cook Islands as well as to those outside.

Other Development Goals

The potential for television to contribute to social and economic development has for years been the focus of many studies. For the most part, television has failed to live up to its expectations. Whether such expectations are realistic to begin with seems to strike at the heart of the issue. This is not the place for a detailed discussion of the potential contributions which television can make. Nor is

[19]Most of the Cook Islands exports are to New Zealand.

[20]New Zealand remains the primary aid donor to the Cook Islands.

[21]On the other hand, such freedom clearly has its limits. The Prime Minister has warned that if media were not prepared to promte integrity witin their own profession then "you are extending an open invitation to Pacific governments to formulate a code for you, and you of the media will have only yourselves to blame." (Keith-Reid, p16, 1990).

[22]Held in late February of 1990. This resulted in the Rarotonga Declaration on government-media relations.

it the forum for yet another discussion of the failure of the dominant paradigm — and the emergence of alternatives to development communications. Rather it is only to highlight that in the case of the Cook Islands, talk of using television to promote development remains vague. Indeed, other than by providing children's educational programs, such as Sesame Street (designed for different societies), little planning is actually being made to use television in any way that might improve the nation's education or contribute towards other development objectives.

Moreover, because CITV is under pressure to help meet its own operating expenses, it has adopted the practice of charging various government agencies interested in development programs the same rates which it charges commercial businesses. Likewise, production costs for such agencies are set using similar criteria. The result is that although many government agencies, such as the Ministry of Health, have a strong desire to use television in helping address various social needs, the high costs involved in both production and exhibition prove prohibitive. Given this policy it seems unlikely that any serious or longterm efforts will be made to effectively use television in promoting social and economic development — unless there is a major shift in policy on the part of CITV.

Structure of CITV

The basis for the Broadcast Act was provided for by TVNZ. Essentially, the law is patterned after the government corporation model (i.e. BBC) so common in many former British colonies. Hence, introducing television in the Cook Islands is not only about the introduction of production technology and programming, but also about the adoption of political and economic institutions.

The Cook Islands Broadcasting Act, ratified only days before the commencement of broadcasting, created the CIBC and specifies the powers and functions of this new body. In accordance with the Act, the CIBC assumes responsibility for the operation of the island's television as well as AM radio station. The CIBC is empowered to hire CITV's general manager and staff and to enter into contract negotiations.

Although the Broadcasting Act specifies numerous powers of the government (including power to revoke CIBC's license), its primary influence comes through three powers: its appointment of the CIBC Board of Directors[23]; its ability to appropriate funds from Paliament (currently through the Culture and TV Tax)[24]; and by its Ministerial Directives[25]. The latter provides government with the power to determine practices which serve the public interest and which the CITV is obligated to

[23]Cook Islands Broadcast Act, Section 11.
[24]Cook Islands Broadcast Act, Section 20-C.
[25]Cook Islands Broadcast Act, Section 42.

perform. Such directives are only valid (at least in law), however, when they do not conflict with the Act[26].

Section 40 of the Act also empowers government to appoint a Program Advisory Committee commissioned with the task of establishing criteria under which programs may be aired on CITV. These program guidelines may specifiy material which would be offensive to community standards and specify the amount of local programming which should air on CITV. For all practical purposes, however, this PAC acts only in name. Early on tensions developed between the PAC and the Board over who had the power to actually select programs which are aired. The Board feared that the basis of such decisions would fail to adequately address the Corporation's economic interests. Although the Act states that the PAC shall "advise" the CIBC regarding all aspects of programming, it does not state what the CIBC is required to do with such advice. Hence, the PAC has been only minimally involved in the introduction of television. They did develop a basic programming guideline — but in practical terms this did nothing that the Act had not itself already made provisions for. At this stage, then, programming decisions are left mostly to the CIBC Board.

The experience of the CIBC in the first six months of CITV's operation has been one of "crisis management."[27] This has been particularly noticeable in upper management where numerous resignations have resulted. At the end of six months, even the station's general manager had resigned. Staff at the station indicated that working at CITV was often unpleasant and highly stressful. In one case a physical fist fight unfolded between two senior level managers.

There are a number of different interpretations as to what is causing such problems within CITV. Everyone that the author interviewed suggested different reasons. These range from tensions between expatriate management and Cook Islanders to various complaints about specific individuals who create particular working environments. One of the more interesting explanations, however, was that much of the management style which proved so effective in getting CITV on the air in less than two months was in direct conflict with the style needed to keep it there.

If this is the case, it would suggest that much of the problem at CITV is a direct result of the rush to get on the air. Another consequence may be the lack of time for adequate training requiring all current training to be on the job with little time for reflection. The rush to get on the air probably also led the CIBC Board of Directors to be more involved in the day-to-day management of CITV than may have been the case if more time were involved. Indeed, one of the greatest frustrations that the

[26]Section 10-2 of the Broadcast Act prohibits directives in respect to a particular program; the gathering or presentation of news or current affairs programs; contracts for the provision of programs; or the staffing of the corporation.

[27]Interview with Tim Arnold, Chairman of the CIBC.

general manager had was his sense that the Board made all decisions rendering him completely without any power as a general manager.[28]

How CITV resolves these problems within its structure remains to be seen. At the end of its first six months it was without a general manager and its sales manager soon resigned thereafter. The Board recognized this as the single greatest challenge facing CITV at the time. Nonetheless, it continues day-to-day operations — albeit in a somewhat tense working atmosphere.

Cultural Concerns

As was previously mentioned, much of the early resistance to the introduction of television in the Cook Islands was motivated by fears of the potential for TV to wipe out local indigenous culture. Television was seen as a tool for the neo-colonial domination over former colonies. Whether such domination can actually be attributed to televised images remains a major point of debate among media scholars. This report is hardly a forum for resolving the debate. Indeed, regardless of whether scholars can empirically support such hegemonic domination, what seems most important is that there was at least an impression that such domination could accompany television.

One reason why the opposition against television may have subsided somewhat may be that the advent of VCR's had, for practical purposes at least, made the issue moot. If there was cultural domination by foreign images, it was already widespread in the form of thousands of videotapes circulating throughout the islands. Such videotapes display material which makes normal broadcast television mild in comparison. Moreover, despite an official video censor for the island nation, such videos are viewed with little control[29]. Indeed, societies throughout the world have learned that unlike broadcast television, video is almost impossible to control (Ganley & Ganley, 1987).

There is clearly a perception that values portrayed in foreign videos were strongly dominating local culture. This is best stated, perhaps, in the report of a recent government commission inquiring into educational reform for the Cook Islands: "The influence of video was felt to be the single most important influence today upon a Rarotongan child's life in terms of forming attitudes and dictating daily behavioral rhythms. It was widely alleged that it had been, on Rarotonga, more influential than the church, the family and the school put together and was in the process of redefining the habits, customs, attitudes, values and lifestyle of Rarotongas youth (Ministerial Task Force, 43, 1990)."

So in the form of video, the potential for cultural damage was already in motion and little could be done to curb things. What worse could television do? If anything, in such an environment television

[28]Interview with Freddie Keil, former general manager of CITV.

[29]To date no fines have been levied by the official censor. Although it is possible that there has been no violation of the censorship code in the Cook Islands, this seems unlikely given the experience of other countries.

introduces some concept of control. Indeed, through local production, broadcast television presents a serious competitor to video. Perhaps the advent of television could help develop a local industry presenting local culture in a way which could compete with video.

By insisting that local television must not simply program foreign material but include locally produced programs, the CIBC took the first step towards creating a new cultural industry within the Cook Islands. This was no simple task. Indeeed, this was the one area where the CIBC was most in conflict with TVNZ which had argued for only minimal local programming (no more than 5 minutes a day). Despite the TVNZ advice, CITV began operations with a serious commitment to local production. Hence, a new local cultural industry has emerged.

This is particularly important to the Cook Islands. The limited market size in the islands proved prohibitive in terms of developing a local film industry (although Cook Islanders did serve as extras in various films shot on location there). Hence, the advent of television acted as the catalyst towards the local production of materials in a film/video format. Some of this new material seems to represent a genuine effort to present programming that is more culturally authentic.

Programming

This is not to suggest that Western programming does not dominate CITV. To a large extent, perhaps, such Western domination can be attributed to the economies of scale which work to the advantage of large markets by helping recover initial programming investments such that these same programs can then be leased at far lower rates than the Cook Islands could ever possibly compete with. Most foreign programs lease for about $50. Thus, it remains far cheaper to lease an American program (leased via New Zealand TV) than to produce one locally.

Nonetheless, CITV has demonstrated a remarkable dedication towards producing local material. At the end of its first six months of operation, roughly 30% of programming was of local origin. This is particularly impressive if compared with other island societies. TTT, the television network for Trinidad & Tobago had revenues in excess of US$80 million in 1984, yet it had less than 20% local programming (Skinner, 1990). Television advertising in Jamaica accounted for US$42 million[30] in 1987, yet only 24% of TV programs were locally produced (Brown, 1990)[31]. Although American Samoa once produced over 6000 programs per year, by 1979 that had declined to but 40 minutes of local programming per week (Schramm, Nelson & Betham, 1981).

Thus CITV is demonstrating a serious commitment to local programming, particularly when one considers its limited revenue (to be discussed later in the text). A typical viewing weekday for CITV

[30]The actual figure is somewhat lower as this includes some radio revenue.

[31]Surlin estimates that 87% of television programming in the English-speaking Caribbean was imported content in 1986. (See Surlin, 1990, p299).

begins at 5:00 p.m. with one hour of childrens educational programming. These are imported shows such as Sesame Street[32] and Playschool.

At 6:00p.m. there is a one hour locally produced culture show named Karioi (Raro Mix). Initially the idea behind Karioi was to present a combination of imported music videos and locally produced material. However, because problems developed in trying to secure rights to air the music videos, Karioi has had to rely primarily on local material. Although a few efforts have been made to produce local documentaries for Karioi, the show primarily provides 'live on tape' coverage of local cultural events. Although the producers of Karioi have only received limited training, this show is probably the most culturally authentic of CITV programming.

At 7:00 CITV airs Sale of the Century - a New Zealand game show in which contestants are asked trivia questions with correct responses earning them dollars to eventually shop for prizes. A survey conducted by CITV[33] rated this as the fourth most popular program overall in CITV's imported programming[34].

Te Ronga Veka, the local news show, follows Sale of the Century. Half of the 30 minute newscast is in English with the second half being in Cook Island Maori[35]. The set for Te Ronga Veka has a distinct Polynesian flavor. The male and female co-hosts dress Polynesian style and usually wear a flower above one of their ears. The news includes previously taped segments assembled by CITV's news reporters. A 30 minute broadcast of TVNZ News follows the local news. It is fed live via satellite. This remains the only program, with the exception of occasional feeds (such as a rugby championship), that is received via satellite. All other CITV imported programs arrive on videotape.

Usually the 8:30-9:00 time slot is filled with a 30 minute imported sitcom. Among the more popular sitcoms are the Cosby Show (third most popular imported show), Who's the Boss (rated as fifth most popular import), and Yes Minister[36]. Among the least popular have been programs such as Designing Women and Studio 5-B. Studio 5-B was particularly confusing because the show was not episodic making it difficult to follow - particularly when the episodes were not shown in their normal sequence.

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[32]The Children's Television Workshop has developed a New Zealand version which is leased by CITV.
[33]These findings were not based on ideal survey design. Respondents could pick up a survey form at local stores and fill them out. There was no control in the design. There were some 1200 surveys completed. At the end of its first six months, this was the only official audience evaluation conducted by CITV.
[34]Unfortunately, the survey did not include locally produced material. Hence, there is no survey indication what the response has been to local programming.
[35]Most of the Rarotonga population speak both languages.
[36]An English sitcom.

From 9:00 to 10:00 p.m. CITV usually airs a one-hour imported program. Among these are Matlock (the most popular imported show) and Jake and the Fatman (second most popular show)[37]. Other shows in this time slot include China Beach and Beyond 2000. On Friday nights the scheduel is slightly modified to allow for a movie (the movies are much the same as air on American commercial television). The broadcast night ends with replays of Te Ronga Veka and TVNZ News from 10:00 to 11:00 p.m.

Weekend programming is similar except that it does not include the locally produced Te Ronga Veka or Karioi. Instead, Sundays usually include 2 hours of local sports. Also Sundays include local religious programs. Such programs are paid for by various religious groups on the island — primarily the Apostolic Church and the Baha'i Faith. They are produced locally independent of CITV. The Apostolic Church has its own studios and the Baha'i show is produced through leased equipment. Weekend programming also usually includes a documentary. At the time this research was being conducted, plans were being made to air Tagata Pacifica, a a 30 minute show to be produced for the region by TVNZ.

It is difficult, without more systematic research, to speculate as to what Cook Islanders expect of televiision. Video has, on the one hand, developed amongst Cook Islanders certain expectations regarding what television should look like. On the other hand, the advent of the camcorder and the widespread distribution of home-produced materials (weddings and the like) seem to have also developed toleration for materials which are not as "professional" (in itself such professionalism represents cultural values). CITV, however, has clearly identified its goals — it wants to look like TVNZ. This means it needs people familiar with Western television to train the local staff.

Where such training occurs, it is often done in-house with the Canadian production manager or it is conducted by someone with other experience in Western media systems - typically a consultant who flies in for this purpose[38]. Such training remains largely technical (i.e. how to edit) and is mostly done to help the news team. Most training is on job and on site.

News

Where training occurs, it is clearly to emulate the West. This is particularly noticeable in news. The introduction of television news affords a very unique opportunity to CITV. In the case of the Cook Islands, one sees how television news is being "negotiated." On the one hand are local expectations, shaped largely from the reporters prior experience in the local paper and in radio. On

[37]Over 50% of CITV's imported programs originate in the United States. All programs, however, are leased through TVNZ. More detail on this will be included later in the text.

[38]Financing for such training usually comes from other agencies such as Pacbroad, a regional organization developed specifically for this purpose.

the other are Western expectations for watchdog investigative reporting more typical of Western societies. Te Ronga Veka's news lies somewhere in between these expectations.

Golding (1977) discusses the transfer of values that often accompanies efforts to develop local human resources. He maintains that such influence is exerted in both direct and indirect ways. By direct he refers to training classes which are often conducted overseas or in which a Westerner teaches locals how to produce TV. Most such efforts make little, if any, attempt to make such instruction relevant to the particular conditions of Third World countries. Indirect sources of influence include competition from Western shows which often set the standard for "good television" (although they need not). Indeed, often this is done despite audience preference for more local forms.

Hence, it's not just that consultants come in telling the reporters what news is supposed to look like. Te Ronga Veka, by airing back to back with TVNZ News, is caught in the tide of Western expectations. The CIBC maintains great interest in helping the local staff develop the type of show that would look more like TVNZ. On economic terms this can be understood. Afterall, the newscasts are the prime location for local advertising spots. Local businesses, most of which are operated by expatriates and the local elite, expect and evaluate news by Western standards. They are more interested in buying time when the show looks Western because that's what they think news is.

To a large extent, perhaps, this is based on concepts such as "objectivity" which often come to dominate the practice of Third World communicators. Yet often such canons reflect a highly Western context while ignoring many other factors which might be more appropriate to particular nations. Indeed, as Boyd-Barrett notes (1977), the concept called "objectivity" was itself the product of unique historical circumstances and does not represent a universal inherent truth.

Local islanders, therefore, may have a completely different concept of news. To locals, talking about positive events (usually the closing human interest story on a typical Western newscast), perhaps, should provide the bulk of news. Local reporters indicated that they often felt uncomfortable with the aggressive watchdog reporting that is expected of them. But gradually they are learning to adjust to what is being expected of them. Herein one finds the "negotiation" at work.

Where the least amount of negotiation is occuring is in the Maori portion of the newscast. To a large extent, the reporters are left with relative freedom in this regard[39]. It is interesting, however, to note the gradual change occuring in the English portion of the show. This remains a topic for greater research. Hopefully, however, such research will not be delayed too far in the future. The early days of Te Ronga Veka provide a fascinating case study of how such cultural negotiation occurs.

[39]Expats typically don't speak Cook Island Maori, so this portion of the show caters exclusively to Cook Islanders.

Economic Considerations

Much of the particular shape that a broadcast system takes is influenced by economic forces. Indeed, as McAnany notes, there is a "close and logical relationship between the economic structure that produces the product and the content and presumed impact of that product (1984, 187)." What economic considerations are relevant to the introduction of television in the Cook Islands?

Television, of course, remains a costly medium. This despite the fact that major technological innovations over the past years have greatly reduced the cost of production. Nonetheless, it cost over NZ$1,000,000[40] to put CITV on the air and it currently costs CITV another NZ$1,000,000 a year just to stay on the air. By U.S. standards this sum may seem small — but it represents a sginificant investment by local standards. And such expenses are likely to increase in the years to come as CITV attempts to extend to the outer islands and increase local production. Given such costs, can the Cook Islands really afford television — particularly given its limited economies of scale? Indeed, Morgan (1987) maintains that only Fiji and Papua New Guinea have sufficient markets in the South Pacific to make television economically viable. Where would the revenue necessary to operate CITV come from?

Katz and Wedell's (1977) survey of broadcasting around the world demonstrate that it is rarely the case that a television system in the Third World is financed from only one source. Usually, such systems rely on government finance, advertising, license fees and, where possible, foreign aid. In the case of CITV the CIBC is capable of raising finances through all these means. But so far, it has relied primarily on loans, a special government tax, and advertising.

Although the Broadcast Act empowers the CIBC to collect licensing fees, it has chosen not to persue this largely because of the capital investment needed for enforcement. Indeed, as Katz and Wedell note, it costs the U.K. over $17 million per year (in the mid-1970's) to operate their licensing system. In relative terms the cost can be higher for developing countries where widespread evasion of the tax is often the case. Placing special decoder boxes provides one method of enforcement, but this method demands even greater capital investment. In consideration of such investment, the CIBC chose to avoid reliance on a license fee. Whether it decides to rely on such a fee in the future remains to be seen.

Instead, the government implemented a 2% Culture and Television Tax (added to the income tax). Of course, not all of this money will go to CITV. The Cook Islands is also currently persuing a number of "cultural" projects including the construction of a multi-million dollar culture center for tourists. The government had not, within the first six months of operation, decided how to allocate revenues collected from the tax. Undoubtedly, however, a considerable amount will go to CITV.

[40]Rougly equal to US$600,000.

Advertising

Even so, the revenue collected from the Tax will not cover CITV's operating expenses. The Broadcasting Act requires that CITV work towards becoming financially self-sufficient. In practical terms, this means that CITV must advertise. Currently, the CIBC hopes to generate up to 40% of its operating revenues from advertising. Whether it can actually do this remains to be seen. In its first three months of operation it had only raised NZ$45,000 in advertising revenue (Browne, April 17, 1990). At that rate, advertising would account for less than 20% of CITV's budget.

It is questionable whether the Cook Islands economy can really support television advertising. It raises the fundamental question: Why should anyone advertise? Is there any relationship, whatsoever, between advertising on CITV and actual sales? Is television advertising in the Cook Islands cost-effective? Have businesses that have refused to advertise suffered in any way?

Because the Cook Islands is such a small economy with strong interpersonal ties, consumers are highly aware of the current inventory of most stores on the island. Every week boats arrive from overseas — docking dates are listed in the local newspaper. It's amazing to see the extent to which people are aware of the inventory on these ships. Consequently, when a shipment of Coca-cola arrives people know about it. They can even estimate which shops will carry it and at what cost. People know which shops to go to for practically any commodity. Moreover, limitations in shipment mean that people care little whether they buy Coke or Pepsi — they often buy whatever is available. This is particularly the case on the outer islands.

In such an environment, what role does advertising play? If advertising has proved an effective tool for financing other broadcasting systems it is largely because those economies have been able to support TV ads. But for how much longer will local businessmen continue to advertise?

To a large extent, the ads which have appeared on television have been the result of an aggressive effort on the part of sales staff of CITV. But, with few exceptions, such advertising has not resulted in dramatic changes for local business. Futhermore, businesses which have not advertised have not seemed to suffer. CITV continues to have to broadcast slides of Cook Island scenary in slots which it hopes will someday be filled with ads.

Of course, one solution to fill this void would be to more actively persue foreign ads. Here the primary problem is that the CITV market, with less than 2,000 TV households, is of little appeal to foreign interests. Moreover, actively recruiting such ads costs money as well — there is considerable cost, for example, in setting up an office in New Zealand. Such expense is difficult to justify given the small economy of scale. The only solution seems to lie in finding a foreign agent, such as TVNZ, to recruit Cook Island advertising.

The CIBC knows that it cannot rely exclusively on advertising revenue. All it can do is generate whatever cash it can given the limited economy. It has started to become a little more innovative — relying more on ads in exchange for services (with the domestic airline for example) and by selling half-hour program spaces to local religious groups. The latter not only contributes to the operating expenses in the form of income, but also help reduce the programming expenses (as CITV does not have to fill the time at its own expense).

For the foreseeable future, then, keeping CITV operating will continue to be difficult. Yet another question, however, is how the initial NZ$1,000,000 investment to put the system on air will ever be recovered. This is a question which has been deferred to the future. For the time being the money has been borrowed from the Post Office. Yet no strategy has been worked out to repay the Post Office. Eventually this issue will probably re-surface. For now it remains enough of a challenge just keeping the station operating.

Impact on Other Media Industries

So far, discussion of the costs of introducing television have focused on the more direct and immediate. But television broadcasting also has many indirect costs. Among these are costs in terms of losses to other media industries. How, then, has the introduction of broadcast television affected the other media outlets of the island?

Of all existing mass media on the Cook Islands, VCR's represent the single industry most significantly affected by the introduction of broadcast television. Many video rental outlets report losses in excess of 50% of their revenues which they attribute to the introduction of broadcast television. Most significantly effected are the smaller outlets which often double as a "dairy" (small local store). Because such small outlets cannot afford to fill their inventory with the latest video tapes, they have found it increasingly difficult to compete with the major outlets on the island. Of course, the long-term impact of broadcasting on video rentals remains unknown. It is entirely possible that in time, for example, video rentals will again rise as more households are equiped with television sets (due to broadcasting) and find it worthwhile to invest the extra money in purchasing a VCR. In other words, the introduction of broadcast television may ultimately increase the number of VCR's on the island which may correspond with increased rentals. Nonetheless, in more immediate terms the introduction of broadcast television has clearly cost video rental outlets — particularly among the smaller shop owners.

Also seriously affected is local radio which has suffered particularly in terms of loss to advertising revenues. Rarotonga, with a population of less than 10,000, has only a small number of businesses. With the introduction of television these businesses were solicited to advertise on the new medium.

Similarly they are being solicited to advertise in the newly privatized newspaper. There is no sophisticated marketing research to evaluate the extent to which such television advertising compares to radio or print. But even a modest number of TV spots is far more costly for local businesses. The money spent on the ads has to come from somewhere — and to a large extent it has come at the expense of radio ads. Also, because the CIBC also runs the local AM radio station, many radio employees now have additional responsibilities related to television. Hence, beyond the sag in radio ad revenue, there are greater efficiency demands on radio station employees as well. Clearly, then, radio has been deeply affected by the introduction of television.

Although the local cinema has also experienced some loss in movie attendance, this is not nearly as heavy as it was years earlier when VCR's were first introduced. Before the advent of the VCR there were three cinema's on Rarotonga — but following the introduction of video two of the movie theaters could no longer operate on a profitable basis. To a large extent, then, the local movie theater had already bottomed to such an extent that the introduction of television did not deal as severe a blow as it did to other media industries.

Likewise, there seems to be little observable economic consequences to the local paper. Partially this may be due to the fact that only a few months prior to the introduction of television, the government-run Cook Islands News was privatized. Although the new paper is criticized for its lack of content in Cook Island Maori, the overall quality seems to have improved. It has maintained its circulation figures (rougly 1500) despite almost doubling its purchase price. Indeed, the newspaper still probably remains the most credible of mass mediated news sources on the island.

Although the newspaper competes with other media for advertising dollars, the paper itself maintains that it has not suffered in terms of advertising loss largely because it attracts different advertisers (Government frees the news, 1990). The introduction of television news, however, did cost the newspaper in terms of its human resources as a number of its best reporters left the paper to join the TV news team. On the whole, however, this seems relatively inconsequential as the paper has quickly filled such positions and developed new talent. Futhermore, the advent of television has meant more revenue for the paper as CITV finds itself purchasing large amounts of space to advertise current programming.

Capital flight

In attempting to look at the big picture, it is difficult to estimate the exact cost that the introduction of television has had to the people of the Cook Islands. In particular, however, this cost seems to have increased capital outflow from the island economy. Most of the capital spent on operating CITV

ends up on foreign shores although the exact nature and destination of such flight remains to be studied in more detail.

To be sure, some of the money invested in CITV remains in the Cook Islands economy. The wages of employees, for example, is one such expense. However, one must remember that there are less than 20 employees in the CITV, most of whom are modestly paid. Hence, this does not account for a dramatic return to the economy.

There is also some return to the local economy in the form of the commission earned by local store owners through the sale of television sets and antennas. Even here, however, such commission is small relative to the cost of the television set itself — revenue which will ultimately end up on some distant shore. There is also customs duty on incoming television sets and VCR's. Another return to the economy could be in television maintenance (where such maintenance remains local). Finally, there is the income generated by the local newspaper in the form of advertising space purchased by the CITV in promoting local programming. On the whole, however, such returns to the economy are small in comparison to the capital which leaves the economy.

In the case of the Cook Islands, television already seems to be accounting for a considerable amount of capital flight. With over 60% of CITV's budget going to programming costs, the majority of capital flight goes to TVNZ (which then pays some unknown amount to various program distributors for "tagging on" the small Cook Islands market to their own)[41]. Also, the cost of production equipment can be seen as another cost which ultimately leaves the local economy. Then there's incidental expenses necessary to support CITV — from paper to shipping. Television also may bring about increased consumption of electricity which is particularly costly given the Cook Islands dependence on oil from overseas. This is particularly the case in the outer islands where electricity is currently only available a few hours per day. Already, the advent of the VCR has increased local demands for more hours of electricity. How will the introduction of television influence such expectations? There are also financing costs which the various loans ultimatley impose. And finally, there is the cost in terms of losses to other media industries on the island.

When all such expenses are accounted for, it seems most probable that broadcast television in the Cook Islands is not only costly in immediate terms but also to the extent that it results in greater capital flight out of the island nation. This is not to suggest that television should not be the lot of the inhabitants of this Polynesian society. But rather, that such services come at a cost[42]. Other nations

[41]When CITV's general manager wrote to program distributors seeking to by-pass TVNZ, word got back to TVNZ which scorned CITV by maintaining that their rates have been extremely low. CITV is contractually bound to lease all foreign programming only through TVNZ. TVNZ also charges a US$50/hour compilation fee for all programming it supplies to CITV.

[42]Economic costs must not only be considered in absolute or even relative terms alone. One must also consider the opportunity cost associated with broadcast television. Every dollar invested in television

wishing to develop local television broadcast systems should take such costs into consideration as they evaluate whether to introduce television in their respective societies.

Television in the Outer Islands

Yet another issue, however, is how audiences in the outer islands will respond to the introduction of television. As was mentioned earlier, television in Rarotonga is just the first step in a three year plan during which television will be made available to the outer islands as well. But things differ dramatically between Rarotonga and the other more isolated islands. While Rarotonga, for example, encourages tourism, many of the outer islands have little contact with foreigners. Pukapuka, for example, only has a ship come in every six months. What will the advent of television mean for these island societies?

To better understand this issue, one has to examine the manner in which the outer islands have responded to video. In the past few years the number of VCR players on the various outer islands have multiplied dramatically. Largely this is financed through relatives who work in either Australia or New Zealand[43]. In part this recent rise in VCR's is probably due to the introduction of electricity. Studies have shown that the three primary immediate uses following the introduction of electricity on these islands is in lighting, refrigeration, and VCR's (Tack, 1986).

Videotapes are rented at the local store (they are shipped there from video outlets on Rarotonga on an occasional basis). The same videotapes are viewed time and time again. Children play "Rambo" and "Ninja Turtles" (whereas they used to play local island games and "hide and seek"). Karate movies are particularly popular, due perhaps to their action orientation which makes them easier to understand than complex plots which require dialog for comprehension. Although English and Cook Island Maori are the official languages of the Cook Islands, one finds many in the outer islands in particular who do not feel particularly confident with English. Yet videos are available (at least at rental outlets) only in the English language[44].

As was previously discussed, the author collaborated with Fred Webb, a local high school teacher, and with his students on the outer island of Mangaia to conduct a survey of video use on the island. Although more detailed analysis remains to be done, preliminary findings suggest that video helps influence local perceptions of the world that exists beyond Polynesia. Personal interviews

represents a dollar that could have been invested elsewhere in the economy. This is particularly the case since 100% of current TV expenditure is generated from within the Cook Islands economy, whereas most other forms of government expenditure (i.e. education, agriculture, etc) are usually matched by foreign (primarily New Zealand) aid.

[43]In the case of Mangaia, the authors collaborative research suggested that roughly 40% of VCR's were gifts.

[44]There are also karate videos available in Chinese. The popularity of these programs suggests that dialog is not as important as the visual message.

suggested that when local inhabitants hear on the radio that there is a war in the Middle East, they understand that concept primarily in the manner depicted in videos. Likewise, when they hear of an earthquake they visualize it in the manner portrayed in a particular movie. Prior to video, many of these concepts had little meaning.

What is particularly interesting to note are local perceptions in areas that rapidly changed — U.S.-Soviet relations, for example. On the outer islands, U.S.-Soviet relations are still understood in terms similar to those depicted in Rambo. Indeed, in interviews conducted on Mangaia, the author was suprised at the extent to which people, after viewing The Day After, believed that Kansas was a place that had actually been destroyed by nuclear bombs.

Will broadcast television replace video as the central medium for developing an image of the world beyond? Will the live broadcasts on the evening news showing an earthquake in Mexico change the islander's understanding of the concept? Will he/she rely primarily on the news for the latest on the situation in the Middle East? Will such themes dominate local discussions? This remains to be seen — it certainly provides for yet another area of future research.

The survey also revealed conflicting interpretations among local islanders as to whether such changes were desireable to begin with. 84% of those responding said that video had changed the way people dressed. Yet when asked whether this was a positive change answers conflicted. Although the majority (60%) said that the change was not desireable, many thought it was because it brought new concepts of fashion to the island. Hence, video seems to strike at the heart of tension between tradition and change.

There is also another interesting question regarding the potential impact of the introduction of television in the outer islands. In the outer islands there is currently a very different conceptualization of time than one might find on the more cosmopolitan main island. Old rugby matches are watched with the same enthusiasm as if it were a live broadcast — even though the viewer may have seen the same match on multiple occasions. Will the concept of time change with the introduction of television?

Indeed, one of the surprising findings that the survey suggested was the impression amongst some islanders that video "created" leisure time. Ironically, many did not define the type of activities that they engaged in prior to the advent of video as leisure (i.e. eating, homework, housework, sewing, etc). Leisure activities were far more rare (i.e. a local dance - or even a movie). But the introduction of video, it seems, helped redefine concepts of leisure time. One respondent stated this particularly well. Before video he was "always at work. Never gets free time before video."

As there remains only two years before television is extended to all remaining outer islands, time is of the essence if studies hope to compare such island societies before and after the introduction of

television. The preceeding discussion only highlights a few of the many cultural issues related to the introduction of television. There remains much to be learned about the potential cultural impact that introducing broadcast television may have in the Cook Islands. Hopefully, more will be learned in the years ahead.

Future Research

The Cook Islands provides a rich site for future research by media scholars. As the first South Pacific nation to entirely finance its own broadcast television network, its experience with television can be of tremendous value to many of its neighbors currently considering the adoption of television. These societies, like the case of the Cook Islands, are already saturated with VCR's. Yet no existing research to date has been conducted on introducing broadcast television to societies already experiencing the advent of the VCR. Does the presence of VCR's change expectations, for example, about the type of programming that television is supposed to provide? If so, how?

Is it also viable for such societies, given their limited economies of scale, to engage in local production to the extent that the Cook Islands has? What costs (both economic and social) are associated with such a commitment? Does television really contribute to national integration? Will the Cook Islands back down from its current commitment to local programming, as has been the experience of American Samoa and most other island societies? Or will the Cook Islands, despite being one of the worlds smallest national broadcast systems, prove to be the exception and continue producing programs locally?

Is advertising economically viable in the Cook Islands? What role does advertising play in societies already rich in interpersonal networks? Should advertising fail to significantly contribute to CITV, where will it turn to raise the necessary capital to survive?

How do people in the Cook Islands "read" television? What "negotiation" occurs within these islands? How do these islanders use television to construct their social reality? And what impact will the introduction of television have in the outer islands? How will it change concepts of leisure and time?

How has the advent of broadcast hurt (or helped) other media industries within the Cook Islands? What impact has it had on the overall state of the economy? What capital flight, if any, specifically results from the introduction of television?

Indeed, there is no fewness of questions to be addressed. The case of broadcast television in the Cook Islands provides a rich site for media scholars from a wide range of theoretical perspectives. Delaying such research, however, could mean that a valuable research opportunity will be forever

lost. With only two years remaining in the expansion of television to the Cook Islands, time is of the essence.

Conclusions

Broadcast television has come to the Cook Islands — albeit at considerable expense. Many other island nations throughout the South Pacific are currently giving serious thought to the idea of developing a television system in their respective countries as well. Unlike the experiences of American Samoa and French Polynesia, these societies will probably have to invest a great deal of their own money in such endeavours. Is it worth the expense?

The issue, then, is no longer purely about cultural considerations. The advent of the VCR may have dramatically changed the terms of the classic television debate. Today's debate is also about money. Is it economically viable for island societies to address their cultural concerns while introducing broadcast television? Will Cook Islands television be able to afford to continue its significant commitment to local production?

This is not to suggest that island societies should not introduce televised broadcasting in their respective nations, but rather, that in so doing they give full consideration to economic concerns as well and decide whether such expenses can be justified. Entertainment alone may provide suffient justification — as may hopes to build national identity — but ultimately this remains a choice for the island nation to make.

The Cook Islands remains a fascinating story of a national broadcast system going to air in less than two months. Whether sufficient forethought was given to all the implications behind introducing television remains unclear. Undoubtedly, however, the rush to introduce television there has had some consequences. Indeed, as Schramm noted with regards to the potential introduction of television in Fiji: "It is important for a young coutry installing television in an old culture to consider carefully how fast and how soon it wants to introduce television, what kind of television it wants to introduce, what it hopes its people, especially its children, will learn from television, what it should do to prepare its people for the experience and how it can check up on the effect (Asia-Pacific Institue for Broadcasting Development, 1981)."

Communication scholars may be able to help such societies more fully realize the various considerations associated with the introduction of broadcast television. Indeed, as Jayaweera (1986) maintains, the challenge of realizing the full potential of particular technologies within particular nations often requires some policy research — research which, he argues, is seriously lacking.

A great deal can be learned by studying the experience of the Cook Islands with television. Much remains to be seen. And the current expansion of the television network into the outer islands provides a unique opportunity for comparison both before and after the advent of broadcast TV. More research is needed to fully assess the impact of television on this island nation. Hopefully, this will be the topic of future research in the region. Indeed, if this study has done little more than describe the first six months of broadcast television in the Cook Islands, it is still hoped that it might invite other scholars towards greater study in the region. The South Pacific has simply been ignored for too long.

I wish to thank the many people of the Cook Islands that helped me during my brief stay in these beautiful Polynesian islands. In particular I wish to thank Fred Webb and his gracious family for their tremendous hospitality during my stay in Mangaia, Teata Makeriri for helping me become more sensitized to Maori culture, Debbie Stresneck for all she did to help accomodate my visit, the Brill family for lending me their moped which proved to be my basic form of transport, Terai Koronui for her assistance in helping me understand an 'insiders view' of CITV, the Baha'i community which acted as my family away from home, and the employees and management of CITV for all their valuable assistance and patience. I thank them all for their wonderful bonds of friendship.

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